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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000370

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2030

TAGS: PTER PREL MARR MOPS KCRM RP

SUBJECT: SENIOR ABU SAYYAF GROUP LEADER BELIEVED KILLED ON
JOLO

REF: 09 MANILA 0902 (RED CROSS KIDNAPPING)

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Leslie A. Bassett, Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: On February 21, six members of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) were killed in a battle with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) on Jolo Island including, we believe, the prominent ASG sub-commander Albader Parad. If Parad's death is confirmed, it would be a significant blow to a terrorist group responsible for numerous attacks and the deaths of American citizens. The U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) assisted the AFP operation with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support. Separately, on February 18 in Manila, an ASG member believed to have participated in a brutal 2001 kidnapping of American citizens was arrested by Philippine authorities. End summary.

Background

¶2. (S/NF) The ASG, a designated terrorist group with historical ties to Al-Qaeda, is known for its kidnappings and brutality. Among other attacks, the ASG carried out the 2004 bombing of the ship "Superferry 14" in Manila Bay, killing 116 people. A 2001 ASG kidnapping operation resulted in the deaths of two U.S. citizens: Guillermo Sobero was beheaded by his captors and Martin Burnham was killed during a rescue attempt by the AFP. Founded in the 1990s by Afghanistan-trained Filipino Abdurajak Janjalani, the ASG is considered the most radical Filipino Muslim extremist group. Consistent pressure from the AFP and Philippine National Police, assisted by JSOTF-P's support, has significantly reduced the ASG's membership and effectiveness. While estimates vary, the terrorist group, which operates principally on the islands of Jolo and Basilan, is believed to draw on approximately 250 armed members (although fully dedicated fighters may number only 50). Regardless of size, the ASG remains an active terrorist organization, engaging in regular deadly skirmishes with the AFP and kidnapping three International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employees in 2009 (Ref A). Most recently, ASG members kidnapped and beheaded a school principal whose family was unable to pay ransom. The group on occasion provides protection to senior members of the Southeast Asian terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah who are located in the Philippines and are associated with major terrorist attacks in Indonesia including the 2002 Bali bombing.

AFP Operation Nets Terrorists with U.S. Assistance

¶3. (S/NF) On the evening of February 20, AFP Marines

initiated Operation Bagong Buwan II in the vicinity of Mount Tukay, Jolo Island. At 11:30 p.m. local time, the AFP made contact with what was believed to be an ASG security element near a terrorist encampment. At dawn on February 21, the AFP initiated a raid, exchanging small arms fire and launching several volleys of mortars at enemy positions. Six ASG members were killed, while the AFP suffered one killed and three injured.

¶4. (S/NF) In a private conversation, the AFP directly credited JSOTF-P for providing the ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) support which identified the ASG members moving toward an AFP element, thereby allowing them to remain in position and prepare for combat. A JSOTF-P Field Surgical Team also assisted with the evaluation of the AFP casualties, all of whom are expected to make full recoveries. (Note: The role played by U.S. personnel should not be publicly disclosed, given Philippine political sensitivities.)

ASG Commander Albader Parad

¶5. (S/NF) Albader Parad is a senior ASG commander for whose capture or death the U.S. Department of Defense rewards programs offers compensation of US\$80,000 (larger rewards are offered for only five of the terrorist group's other leaders). Parad is believed to have masterminded the January 2009 kidnapping on Jolo of three ICRC members. The AFP has stated publicly that Parad was one of the ASG killed on February 21, and there is cause for optimism. Four sources

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have visually identified Parad, and his family has contacted the AFP to request that his body be turned over to them. Further analysis and DNA testing will be required to positively identify the six ASG members. At the request of Philippine authorities, the U.S. is assisting with this effort.

ASG Member Arrested in Manila

¶6. (U) Separately, on February 18 in Manila, Philippine authorities arrested Jumadail Arad, a rank-and-file member of the ASG. Arad is believed have been the driver of the speedboat used in the 2001 Sobero/Burnham kidnapping that resulted in the deaths of two American citizens. Arad was arrested at the Manila seaport as he was boarding a ferry bound for the island of Mindanao.

Comment

¶7. (S/NF) If confirmed, Parad's death would represent a significant blow to the Abu Sayyaf Group. Following the capture in the past year of Jemaah Islamiyah facilitator Omar Venancio and Rajah Solaiman Movement leader Dinno-Amar Pareja, Parad's death suggests that the Arroyo administration's strategy of targeting terrorists while simultaneously pursuing peace negotiations with Moro Islamic Liberation Front insurgents appears to be succeeding. This latest victory is particularly welcome in light of the distractions the Philippine Government faces with the state of emergency in Maguindanao province and the ongoing preparations for national elections in May.

BASSETT